

Local Government

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toration, but most of the job had been done by "personal work" (*prosopike ergassia*). This is an old, old practice whereby the community council assigns the families or adults of the village so many days of "voluntary" labor on a task that needs to be carried out in the community interest. In general, a community may call for ten days of work (or pay in lieu thereof) from each able-bodied villager, although it need not do this if there are no projects requiring this much labor. [623] [653] [651] [727]

"Everybody who could," according to the president, "went to the quarries and cut limestone; others cut wood. We paid laborers to construct the lime kiln and then produced our own lime at a saving of twenty million drachmas [over \$1300 then]. While the construction crews were building the new road through here, we brought the stones they unearthed to the church site and, with the help of good masons, put up the structure." Here again local government was getting something done. [316] [333]

On another trip in 1955, returning from a visit to Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain on a peninsula in Northern Greece, I saw a notice nailed to a plane tree near the main fountain of the village. It looked official, so we went up to have a look. It announced the auctioning off of the right to collect a certain kind of tax: [651] [203]

*Announcement of Bidding for the Lease of Farming
of Animal Sale Tax for Fiscal Year 1955-56*

The President of the community of Neochori declares that . . . a bidding is announced for Sunday 17 June between 10-12 A.M. in the Community Building for the highest offer to lease the farming of taxes on animal sales during fiscal year 1955-56.

The amount of 3000 drachmas [\$100] has been determined as the first offer and the amount of 300 drachmas as a guarantee to be deposited by any participant. The tax has been determined at two percent on any sale of animals. Citizens having debts in the community are not accepted. The amount of lease shall be paid in four equal installments, the last to be paid on 31 March 1956. All expenses will be charged to the lessor.

Here the local authorities were following the ancient practice of "farming" out the taxes to the highest bidder who, in turn, was expected to derive from rigorous collection much more than he paid for the right. Every time a bleating goat or an ox changed masters, the successful bidder would collect his 2 percent of the sale price.

The community council has other duties in addition to managing a community-owned radio, rebuilding churches, and collecting taxes. It conducts local elections as well.* By 1951 the political situation had stabilized to the point that local elections could be held throughout the country. Of the registered voters, a greater proportion of women than men voted, thereby showing their appreciation of the right of suffrage. From nine to thirty-one [623] [666] [633]

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their humble houses and subsistence level of living the people like to build beautiful churches with high steeples and decorate them /81/ with as many ikons and church bells they can. The people of Megali Vrisi not being satisfied with the structure of the present church have already quarried stone from the nearby hills for their future church structure. When the farmers were notified to offer personal work for the church they did it without complaint.

The people look up to the church as an institution which gives them hope and courage in times of disappointment and discouragement. Once a year a confession is made in the church in front of the ikons and the priest. People tell of their bad acts and forgive those that caused them trouble. All wedding ceremonies, baptisms and name day celebrations take place in the church.

Attendance. Women and children attend the church regularly. The men are rather irregular in their attendance. This is not due to their negligence nor to their failure to respect the church, but is due to the long church services that last for three hours. The people get tired of going to the church. Most attend the last part of the services. In spite of the variety of music and ceremonial activities, the church is losing /82/ attendance. Men like to know what they hear in the church, and since it is all abstract to them they prefer to stay out and send their wives and children.

With the increase of modern scientific beliefs by the farmers, the church will be forced to change its course and adopt itself to the new social changes.

The membership is obligatory. Every one born in the village becomes a member. It is not necessary to keep in books the names of the members since the whole population of the village naturally belongs to the church.

Contributions. Every family has to contribute for the support of the priest and for the upkeep of the church. This contribution is paid in kind. Besides this the church has voluntary donations by people whose prayers are answered, and by others for the

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